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A Guest Editorial

THE GOSPEL WE PREACH

Rev. Harry R. Butman, Los Angeles, California
Chairman of Executive Committee, National Association

For the first time since September, 1935, the name THE CONGREGATIONALIST appears at the masthead of a journal of religion.

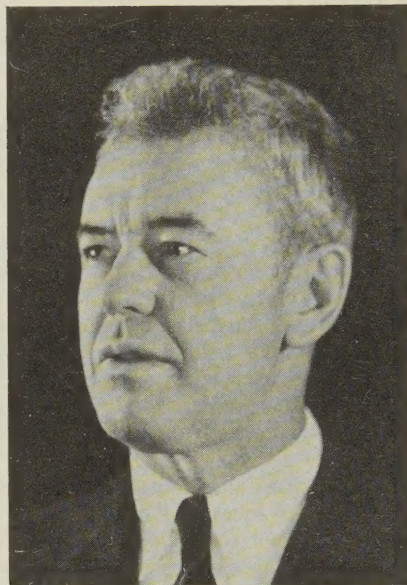
In Milwaukee, January 22, 1958, the Executive Committee of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, in accordance with the directive given by the Hartford meeting, elected a Commission on Missions and Church Extension.

These two events are facets of a single truth of first importance for all Congregationalists. The National Association has now taken the bold but inevitable step of evangelizing. By means of these agencies, by word and by deed, the Christian Gospel will be proclaimed and spread in the Congregational way. This is a strong step forward.

For more than a quarter of a century seminary professors have taught, powerful ecclesiasts have promoted, and docile ministers have echoed the doctrine that the Gospel is a summons to submission, and that the Kingdom of God is an ecclesiastical super-state. The word *ecumenicity* (that Baal, that golden calf of Protestant officialdom) has been the cantrip, the spell, that has ensorcelled preachers and laymen alike, although the word never fell from Christ's lips, nor is its advocacy to be found in His teachings. Urged by the same compulsive craving for conformity which has led to the totalitarian state in the world of politics, men of religion have cried for chains, and this is a cry which never goes unheard or unanswered.

Liberty Is Viable

But liberty is a hard growth, and the drought of Gospel truth in these years has but stunted, not killed it. With the reappearance of a name once most honored in all American religious journalism, and the establishment of a commission to build free churches, and to spread the free church faith, we are seeing a spiritual renaissance. Not without reason did Dr. Daniel Poling, elder statesman among the Christian editors in the United States, call the Hartford gathering of the National Association, "the most prophetic meeting in American Protestantism in the last fifty years." The statement was ignored by the religious reporters of the



REV. HARRY R. BUTMAN

major newspapers, for they too have fallen under the spell of the Circe of ecumenicity. But it was made, and it was true. The tide of tomorrow is with the individual, not the many. In the days to come ("How long, O Lord, how long?") men will move forward out of the gray pall of conformity which now befores them. The whole life process works toward freedom and individuality, and today's sad stagnation by which the group is glorified, is but a back eddy in the mighty stream of life force. Man dare not lose his individuality in the herd; only in God can that loss take place to the soul's profit.

Let us rejoice, therefore, that we are fearlessly thrusting the craft of our movement out into the rough strong current of that stream, disdaining the safety of the marshy backwaters.

THE CONGREGATIONALIST, and the Commission on Missions and Church Extension will make religious history as they reclaim an ancient and presently tarnished treasure by proclaiming the good news of the freedom of the Christian man with all the daring and wholeness which true Congregationalism so abundantly possesses.

The Trumpet Sound

For we have a message to proclaim, and that message is freedom. Consider the good words the Holy Page has for us:

(please turn to page 2)

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land and unto the inhabitants thereof."

"With a great price obtained I this freedom."

"The glorious liberty of the children of God."

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Brethren, these and many like words should be to us as the shouts of strong men going forth to righteous battle, and as the songs of Deborahs hailing the returning victors.

An army charges best when a trumpet is sounded.

There are those of us who yet recall the name of our paper in the great days when it was the voice of free Congregationalism. The full, and all-but-forgotten title was, "THE CONGREGATIONALIST AND HERALD OF GOSPEL LIBERTY." God grant, in the days to come, that all who cherish freedom and toil for its triumph may be cheered, in reading this reborn paper, by words of truth and challenge, and chronicles of achievement and comradeship. May it be a silver trumpet which shall with no uncertain sound forever blow the brave music of freedom.

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A PERILOUS PLEA

Rev. Dr. Max Strang, Marshalltown, Iowa

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Two statements have come to my notice recently, which, to me, are full of peril. Both of them have been made in reference to the setting up of the United Church of Christ. One of the statements contains the plea to "trust our leaders".

The peril of that argument has been demonstrated repeatedly. It ignores the basic truth that no individual, nor group of individuals, are to be trusted in the sense employed by the plea. At the beginning motives may be noble, ends sought may be desirable, and means employed may be just and wise; but invariably, in the very process, motives, ends, and means degenerate. They do so by the very power which is conferred by the trust.

Every offense against the liberty and integrity of the individual has had its inception in the plea, "trust our leaders". Many an evil of society has been rooted in the slogan "trust our leaders". Surely historic events of our time, in our own society, from segregation to labor union leadership, amply document the peril of "trust our leaders". Human nature is just not pure enough to stand the responsibility of power which the attitude of "trusting the leaders" imposes. This plea is frightening, too, because it undermines one of the tenets of Protestantism, the priesthood of *all* believers.

The other side of the plea, "trust our leaders", is "Our leaders know what the will of God for me is." That has been explicitly phrased, in the other statement, in a recent letter, one sentence of which is "In closing, I would add, that I have utmost confidence that our leaders never relax in seeking God's guidance." That is only another way of saying, "Since I have every confidence that our leaders never relax in seeking God's guidance, it is unnecessary for me to seek God's guidance". "Our leaders" will assume the responsibility for me! A devout Roman Catholic could not concede more than that.

Protestantism Repudiated

It is a complete repudiation of the Protestant claim that every person may seek and know God's will for

himself; and under Christ, is himself duty bound to seek to know and to do God's will. Moreover, it is a *carte blanche* invitation to "our leaders" to put forth the claim that they have God's guidance, know what His will is, and that what they do and say are God's will. Indeed, that very claim has already been made by "our leaders". From that prideful position it is a short step — a very short step — to hierarchical arrogance; and to retaliation upon and persecution of anyone who would be so wickedly presumptuous as to question either the validity or the wisdom of the words and deeds of "our leaders".

The Roman Catholic hierarchy does not enjoy anything superior to the claim that "our leaders never relax in seeking God's guidance." It might have been supposed that the Crusades, the Inquisition, the aristocracy of class or race or birth or color, had furnished sufficient proof of the utter falsity of the ancient cry, "God wills it!" Apparently they have not. The wave of the moment may be taking us back to the days before the Reformation, Independency, Separatism, and the Pilgrims. The present hour may be with entrenched ecclesiastical power, and a clerical aristocracy most appropriate for the Middle Ages. Liberalism and the free spirit are in ill repute in some quarters.

Even so, these present days may be but the prelude to another Reformation, another Independency, to other Pilgrims. For the future cannot but be with the invincible spirit, freely seeking and freely endeavoring to do God's will as it may be revealed by the Holy Spirit, in whom only is our confidence and trust. Perhaps it was some such forecast which lay back of Dr. Daniel A. Poling's statement at Hartford that our National Association meeting was the most prophetic church gathering within the last half-century. And if this be true, it is even more necessary that we stand firm, that we make a clear witness to the experience of knowing, each for himself, the will of God, and that there be a fellowship of free churches to nourish the free spirit.

From Yesterday Into Tomorrow

(An Address Given by the Rev. Dr. Henry David Gray, pastor of the South Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn., at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, October, 1957.)

There are few places in all the world better calculated to stir the imagination of a Congregational Christian than the city of Hartford. To this spot at the confluence of the Connecticut River and the "Little River" came Thomas Hooker and his intrepid band of followers in 1635. Here they founded the town, the Connecticut Colony, and transplanted the church which had already been organized in Newtowne (now Cambridge), Massachusetts.

A statue of Thomas Hooker, bearing round its base some quotations from his remarkable utterance on government by the consent of the people for the benefit of the people, stands in front of the Bulfinch designed "Old State House" located at the center of our city on "Thomas Hooker Square". His remains lie buried in the churchyard alongside the Center Church meeting house.

Thomas Hooker's Influence

Thomas Hooker was a remarkable person, for scholarship, for preaching power, for statesmanship, and for the ability to unite in action a community of extremely able and independent individuals. His voice out of yesterday says to us with urgent clarity (1) that the government must be by consent of the governed; (2) that the Church is complete under Christ in its own right; (3) that the Church must influence the affairs of the community by the power of its proclamation of the gospel; and (4) that the way ahead for the colonies was a cooperative federation in which each counselled and helped the others.

These principles out of yesteryear are a firm foundation for a free church future. That future is secure, not because we are few or many, but because we are building on adequate foundations. The New Testament gives strong support to Hooker's emphasis on the self-completeness under Christ of the local church. It gives the lie to all man-made pretensions of powerfully organized national bodies with imposing bureaucracies and high-powered and highly paid public relations experts to do their bidding. The future is *not* in the hands of might and power. It is in the hands of God, in the hands of His truth, His righteousness, and His love. Hooker rightly understood the need for democratic government under the guidance of God. He rightly understood the need for freedom, and moved from the "Cotton orbit" of Boston chiefly, it would appear, to find room for thought and action more than room for cattle and for crops.

A Second Voice

A second great voice from yesterday which speaks with high value for tomorrow is that of John Whiting. John Whiting was for ten years pastor of the First Church, and in the winter of 1669-70, he and a large body of Hartford Christians founded the Second Church — South Church. John Whiting and Elder Goodwin founded this church in order to continue in the Congregational Way. In the legislature and in the church councils of the years following Hooker's death, there were vigorous (and sometimes violent) discussions, chiefly as to whether or not it was right to baptize chil-

dren when only one of the parents belonged to the church. But this was not the real difficulty. The real problem was the presbyterianism of Samuel Stone, who did not trust the judgment of the common Christian and who wanted power centered in the small, select body, and who wished to presbyterianize the colony. The conflict was, as Dr. Leonard Bacon has said, "between opposite principles of ecclesiastical order." The strong minority insisted upon rights and liberties in the church. When Joseph Haynes came to the Hartford church with John Whiting, this presbyterian-congregational controversy broke out anew, for Haynes favored presbyterianism. On a lecture day in June 1666 the whole controversy broke out into flame, and a few years later, on February 22, 1670, John Whiting and 31 members of the Hartford church founded the Second Church in order to hold fast to the principles and practices of the Congregational Way. They declared immediately that for them, "the Congregational Way is the Way of Christ", that a local body of Christian people united by a particular covenant "are a true, distinct, and entire church of Christ", that "such a particular church . . . hath all power and privileges of a church belonging to it," and that counsel and communion is to be sought from sister churches as equals under Christ. The statement which these Congregationalists issued has been called "as complete and flawless a statement of the distinctive principles of Congregationalism as can anywhere be found."

The voice of John Whiting of yesteryear has something else to say to us as free churches facing the future. It calls us to put *principles* first; above *property* (they left their interest in the Hartford church behind, above *position* (they ventured forth not knowing what position in the colony might be theirs); and above *peace* (they gained the right to found this church through two decades and more of strife). The future belongs to men of faith and not to men of present power, and present compromise with a world of power. The future belongs to people of principle and not to men of entrenched position. Fear not, little flock, long before 1957 the few have stood — 32 strong — here in this very place — holding principle first . . . and history has fully vindicated their free church loyalty. God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. . . .

Eternal Vigilance

The third incident from yesterday, which has much to say to tomorrow, relates to the famous Charter Oak tree which stood a few yards to the east of the portico of the Second or South Church. Through the good offices of able, energetic, and tactful Governor Winthrop, there was secured from the king a royal charter for Connecticut which gave to the colony a very large measure of freedom. This charter was a source of great joy. In due time the king died and there came to the throne a successor. The successor appointed in 1689 Governor Edmund Andros to represent him in New England. Andros came to Hartford in order to secure the royal charter, to rescind it and establish here an autocratic rule. As our local legend has it, the occasion occurred in the Old State House. The charter was on the table,

candles lit, when suddenly the candles were all blown out and a certain Captain Wadsworth stole the charter, which was subsequently hid in the heart of a great oak tree, which used to stand a few yards from the façade of this South Church building. The charter can be seen today in the State Library in Hartford. It was never rescinded.

The message of the Charter Oak tree and of the charter which it hid, is that liberty once gained has to be kept at the price of vigilance. You can't take it for granted that a free church constitution *will* be written by the United Church. You can't take it for granted that liberty anywhere in the world will automatically be upheld. Freedom needs to be cherished by a vigilant, alert people, in State or in Church.

The Saybrook Platform

In the year 1708 there was drawn up the Saybrook Platform, a statement of Congregational polity, and a further statement of semi-presbyterianism. With the establishment of the consociation, semi-presbyterian, system, favored by some in Saybrook and condemned by others who attended the meeting, and contrary to the clearly expressed principles of the platform as a whole, and defied by a whole group of Congregational churches, there was initiated a long and controversial period of Congregational history in Connecticut. As many as 32 churches were dubbed *Separatists* because they would not even submit to even the measure of control set forth at Saybrook. At no time did the consociation attempt to take over complete presbyterian control of the local church. The churches still retained the right to own and control their property. They still retained the right to determine their own modes of worship, statements of faith, and were able within certain bounds to call and dismiss their own ministers. Here in Hartford the power of the consociation was never great, as was true in many parts of the state. In one county, Fairfield, the consociation became exceedingly powerful. Here in Hartford took place some of the key events which pushed the consociation into its grave. Those events occurred anent the activities of a Hartford pastor, as we shall see.

Meantime, as we face the future, the prime principles of Saybrook as used here in Hartford are a firm faith in God, a free local church, and a long struggle to keep that freedom in affairs beyond the local church. The idea, just now being broached again, that associations, state bodies, national bodies and so forth, are free in their own spheres was actually carried out here in Connecticut between 1710 and 1850, and was found to be the source of unending debate, political fights, and acrimonious actions. It proved, as clearly as history can prove anything, that presbyterianism and congregationalism cannot be unequally yoked together with happy, wholesome, and holy results. This we should never forget as we churches face the future.

Here in Hartford, in the years 1812 to 1831, there were repeated movements of great religious awakening, in which this church played a considerable role. At the same time, there was a tremendous upsurge of missionary interest, a great dedication of young men to the ministry, and a rising tide of theological debate. In this climate, Yale took a position which was felt by some to be contrary to the best interests of the Congregational Way, so, to preserve and further the Congregational Way, to train leaders for it, and to be center of dynamic concern, there was founded, with Bennett Tyler as its first president, what is today the Hartford

Seminary. Later, the first school for the training of lay workers in the United States joined it, and still later, the first and foremost school of missions in the United States was founded by it. The great library is one of the finest collections of theological works in the nation. On exhibit at the present are many historical documents relating to the 325th Anniversary of the First Church of Hartford, just being celebrated.

From these events in Hartford, I take it that the free churches, as they face the future, can learn three things.

First, religious awakening is the solid and right foundation for any and every advance of the Church of Christ into the future.

Second, a religiously alert people will be a mission-minded people . . . eager to found new churches, eager to help folk across the seas. Here we have a really *great* challenge to our free churches — are *we* religiously alert enough to do these mission tasks? Do we face this call?

Third, a thinking people and a trained ministry are essential for a church of the future and must be had, *at whatever cost*. Yale would not do under the shadow of Taylor, so Hartford Seminary was founded. Harvard would not do under the Unitarian influence so Andover was founded. We must find at once the right place to train *free church leaders*. This is imperative, as is clearly seen in the lesson of the first half of the 19th Century here in Hartford.

Horace Bushnell

We come now to Horace Bushnell. "Here is one for the books," as the saying goes. There is not time to tell the whole dramatic life story of this educator, preacher, apostle of civic righteousness, and brilliant free churchman.

In 1849 this great soul published "God In Christ", a book that started a controversy which makes "the merger" sound like child's play. Certain leaders in the General Association, in February, 1852, blasted the book to the skies, but immediately the noble and saintly Joel Lindsay, then pastor of this church, wrote a defense of Bushnell with which others joined. Nevertheless, meetings, pamphlets, sermons and all possible pressure was exerted on the Hartford Central Association to "try" Horace Bushnell as a heretic and to throw him out of the Congregational ministry. His church stood by him, and in 1852, "annoyed and disturbed by the efforts of outside busybodies," thought it best to withdraw from the "North Consociation of Hartford County" and become one with the 29 other non-consociated Congregational churches in Connecticut.

The controversy dragged on, but the unanimous action of Dr. Bushnell's church actually tolled the death-knell of the whole quasi-presbyterian structure. It went into the discard in practice, and well it might, for actually the constitution of 1818, modelled on an earlier (1784) charter meant the end of enforcement of ecclesiastical rules by civil authority.

Here then is a most important message for the free churches as they face the future. The free mind flourishes in a free church. The fettered mind is the ultimate product of a centralized church. Bushnell would have been tried and expelled had it not been for the freedom of the North Church of Hartford to stand behind him. Surely, he was a progressive soul, but he was equally surely as saintly and as powerful a person as has yet graced the life of any Christian church known by any name in these United States.

COVENANT THEOLOGY AND AMERICAN THOUGHT

Rev. Irving E. Howard, New York, N. Y.

The *Mayflower Compact*, signed by forty-one adult males in the cabin of the *Mayflower* on November 11, 1620, is important not only because it was the first written constitution in the New World, but because it furnishes us with a window into the Pilgrim mind confronted by the problem of government.

After weeks of weary tacking across the stormy North Atlantic, that first *Mayflower* dropped anchor off the tip end of Cape Cod. The Pilgrims found themselves outside the area in which their land grant was authoritative. Discontented members of the party who did not share the Pilgrims' religious commitment seized upon the location of the *Mayflower* to threaten rebellion as soon as they were ashore.

Faced with this threat of anarchy, the Pilgrims drew up the *Mayflower Compact* in order to "covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politick". This language reflects the Covenant Theology which the Pilgrims had brought with them from the Netherlands. The Covenant Theology had developed as a response to the challenge of the new theology of Jacobus Arminius, professor in the University of Leyden, which, known as Arminianism, was a reaction away from Calvinism toward an emphasis on human responsibility. The Dutch Calvinists condemned it at the Synod of Dort in 1619, but the Anglo-Saxon Calvinists tried to meet it by refining Calvinism in order to make room for human responsibility without denying the sovereignty of God or the five points of Calvinism.

Theology and Politics

Dr. William Ames, one of the most important of the Covenant Theologians, was forced to flee from England to Holland in 1610, to escape his less tolerant brethren who suspected him of Separatism. In Holland, he became professor of Theology in the University of Franeker, and his book, *Medulla Sacrae Theologiae* became the textbook of theology for the New England Puritans. Covenant Theology was one thing the Pilgrims and Puritans had in common. In fact, practically all American Calvinists of the 17th century came to accept this variety of Calvinism.

Ames sharply distinguished between a "Covenant of Works" and a "Covenant of Grace", and these theologians used the word *covenant* in the sense of a contract, a document binding upon both signatories. They insisted that God's dealing with mankind has always been in terms of some covenant.

The Pilgrims and Puritans were unique in that they derived a political philosophy from this Covenant Theology. For the Pilgrims, Covenant Theology implied that local groups of believers could be trusted to govern themselves. Ames had said as much in his famous textbook. At first, the Covenant theologians of Boston and New Haven were suspicious of this Congregationalism. Later, however, Congregationalism became the polity of all New England churches as the implications of the covenant theology became explicit. Roger Williams had sojourned in Plymouth long enough to become infected with the Pilgrims' belief in local autonomy and their spirit of independence. Consequently he later revolted against the theocracy of Massachusetts Bay when he was at the church in Salem. His exile and the founding of Providence Plantations is a well-known story. It is important to note that he was a link by

which the *Mayflower* group exerted a wider influence upon the political thinking of the nation. This was partly through the Baptists, of whom Williams became a leader. They carried the stubborn belief that churches should be self-governing wherever they went.

A Natural Development

While the early Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, and later of New Haven, had no intention of establishing either ecclesiastical, political, or economic freedom, and they bluntly warned that anyone who did not wish to conform to their regulations was free to depart, nevertheless by the 18th century they had become the champions of freedom in all three areas. R. H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* tries to explain this as a consequence of forces from without, such as "the democratic agitation of the Independents". It seems rather to have been the natural development of what was implicit in their own Covenant Theology, which the Pilgrims were clear-eyed enough to appreciate.

Samuel Willard of Boston described this implicit voluntarism in the Covenant Theology when he said, "Natural necessity destroys the very nature of the Covenant, for it must be a voluntary obligation between persons about things wherein they enjoy a freedom of will, and have power to choose or refuse. It must be a deliberate thing wherein is a Counsel and Consent between a rational and free Agent". The idea of *consent* which is expressed here was inherent in the Covenant Theology and became basic in American political thought. The Presbyterians, who had accepted the Covenant Theology but had not applied it to government, could see where their New England brethren were going in their political thought. Perry Miller reports their criticism of the Puritans in *The New England Mind* (p. 450, quoted by permission), "If the church were founded on covenant, they asked, and all ecclesiastical power was attributed to the consent of the people, would not the people rule within each church? The result, it seemed to English and Scotch Presbyterians, was bound to be 'democracy', which all the world abhorred." The Presbyterians were not alone in abhorring the word *democracy*. They were typical of their time. *Democracy* was a smear word until the 18th Century. It would be easy to credit the Covenant Theology with too much, but there are two things in American political thought which can be clearly linked to this theology: the idea of contract and the belief in written constitutions.

Sanctity of Contract

When John Wise arose to oppose Cotton Mather's attempt to presbyterianize the congregationally organized churches of the Boston area, he wrote a book, *A Vindication of the Government of the New England Churches* (1710) which was a tract on civil government as well as church polity. In this book Wise made a secular application of covenant thinking which led straight to a contract theory of government. Wise acknowledged himself indebted to Baron Samuel Pufendorf. What is more important, John Wise's reasoning illustrates the fact that Covenant Theology had prepared the soil for John Locke, the political philosopher of the American Revolution. Wise himself gave no indication of having read Locke.

Furthermore, the belief that God's relationship to man can be reduced to a contract instilled in Americans an almost fanatical respect for contracts, so that "the sanctity of contracts" became a part of American character at its best. While the Puritan was a sharp trader, he could usually be depended upon to keep his contract.

Moreover, as we have already noted in Samuel Willard's observation, imbedded in the idea of contract was the idea of consent which is at the foundation of American political institutions. When the Declaration of Independence stated that "governments derive their

just powers from the consent of the governed" it was repeating something which had been implicit in the theology of the Calvinistic settlers since the Pilgrims landed.

In view of this heritage, the Congregationalists' demand for self-government, insistence upon seeing any written constitution that is to govern them before they agree to a union, and a deep respect for any contract that has been made, is hardly surprising. These are characteristics that have made America. To destroy them is treason against a sacred trust.

Our Devotional Column

Rev. Royal G. Davis, Houlton, Maine

The gospels speak of Christianity as a mystery, and ever since, men have tried to explain its secret. The simple yet profound explanation is that the Christ was able to find God in the most unexpected places.

Men have often believed that God was revealed in the powerful personalities of famous men: Abraham, Moses, Amos, even Augustus Caesar. But who would have looked for God among Galilean fishermen and despised publicans? Men have long said that God is revealed at holy places: the temple of Solomon, the oracle at Delphi, the shrine at Mecca. But who would have expected the divine light to blaze forth in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth? Men have compared God to a conquering warrior, a world statesman, or a mighty Ruler of far-flung empire. But who before Jesus could compare God with the love of a father for a wayward son, the trust of a farmer sowing seed, or the beauty of a roadside flower?

Immanuel, "God with us", is the triumphant message with which Christians greet a weary, heart-sick world. God is with us where we may least expect His presence. God can be found in the most unlikely places, as a Bethlehem stable and a Golgotha cross both eloquently testify. When we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts open to the spirit of reverence, God appears above us, around us, and deep within.

The pious of the first century Palestine expected to feel the ennobling presence of God in the Temple at Jerusalem. Surely amid the sublimity of carved stone and the color of impressive ritual, men could say, "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." But notice how seldom Jesus refers to the Temple, how he almost minimizes its sanctity. Pointing to the wayside flowers, He said, "Consider the lilies of the field . . . Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these". Those words seem tame now, yet when originally uttered must have amazed their hearers. It was as if a visitor to the splendor of present-day Washington declared, "The most beautiful things in our nation's capital are the dandelions in blossom on the White House lawn!" Jesus was like that. He saw the divine glory where no one else would have bothered to look. He felt the divine presence in unexpected locations. He heard the divine voice in unheard-of places.

Prayer: Eternal God, reveal Thyself above us in the loveliness of sun-filled sky or star-lit heavens.

Eternal God, reveal Thyself around us in the sanctity of our common lives and local churches.

Eternal God, reveal Thyself within us as we stretch forth our hands in friendly service.

In His name we would act as well as pray. *Amen.*

A Word from the Moderator

Professor George V. Bohman,
Royal Oak, Michigan

About two weeks before you read this, the executive committee of the National Association will have met in Milwaukee. With it, the new Commission on Missions which was authorized at Hartford will also convene and take the first steps to provide those churches who wish it some opportunities for missionary giving.

For most of you, this is the season of intensive church work and often annual meetings in which to sum up a year past and to plan ahead. One church in our area has already voted a new study committee of 12 out of which to reconsider its position in Congregationalism. On January 12 George E. Gullen Jr. and I addressed two hundred who attended the first meeting of the Council for Congregationalism, Mayflower Church, Detroit. The Council offers the church an opportunity through such meetings to re-examine its roots in the Congregational tradition and to re-affirm its faith in the Congregational Way. This church previously voted in favor of the merger, then rescinded the vote, and took a "wait and see" attitude in a protective resolution.

In preparation for my talk yesterday, I examined in more detail the repeated struggles of Congregationalism with those ministers and occasional laymen of Presbyterian tendencies. The oft reasserted vigor, the renewed missionary spirit, the successful appeals of free Congregational churches after severe losses have led me to new confidence that Congregationalism will not only live but, though decimated, will once more attract thousands who seek enlightenment in free churches for themselves and their families. What a privilege to help carry this torch of free Christianity through another of the historic procession of efforts of some men to limit the witness of free churches!

Women's Work

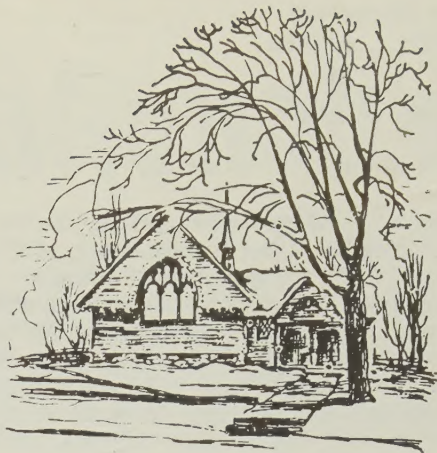
One of the immediate fruits of the Hartford meeting of the National Association and particularly of its Women's Seminar was a Women's Meeting held on November 5, 1957, at Pilgrim Congregational Church, Pomona, California. It was held in connection with the monthly meeting of the Women's Association of Pilgrim Church, which invited the women of all the churches in the area intending to remain Congregational. Women came from ten churches, in cars and chartered busses, so that 324 were seated at the luncheon tables.

After a musical program and devotional service, Mrs. Raymond A. Waser reported briefly on the Women's Seminar at Hartford, on which Mrs. Paul A. Quaintance had already spoken at luncheon. Rev. Raymond A.

Waser, pastor of the entertaining Church, then spoke on the significance of the Hartford meeting.

Such happy fellowship was experienced, with so much enthusiasm engendered, that it was decided to hold a similar meeting at the First Church in Los Angeles in February. It is hoped that out of this will grow a genuine Fellowship for Congregational Women in the Southern California Area.

Women in other areas: go and do likewise! These good women have led the way. Why do not you follow their example? THE CONGREGATIONALIST will be happy to report future women's meetings in New England, in New York, in Pennsylvania, the Middle West and the Northwest. Please send your reports in to Mrs. Paul A. Quaintance, 408 South Highland Avenue, Los Angeles 36, California, who will transmit them to the editor.



THE FIRST CHURCH IN HOULTON, ME. One of the Northeasternmost National Association Churches. In future issues *The Congregationalist* will publish pictures of our churches in other sections of the country.

National Association News Notes

Dr. Harry W. Johnson, our Executive Secretary, returned on December 29 to his home in Boise, Idaho, after an illness of nearly ten weeks. Stricken shortly after the Annual Meeting in October, Dr. Johnson was hospitalized in Boston with two eye operations and a severe case of pneumonia. His many friends in the National Association and elsewhere rejoice that he is on the way to complete recovery, and expects to resume full duties in the near future, with his eyesight restored as it was before his operations.

Recent accessions to the membership of the National Association include the following churches: Maine, Bingham and Newport; Massachusetts, Mystic Church of Medford; New York, First Church of Coventryville; Ocean Av. Church, Brooklyn; Connecticut, East Had-dam; Vermont, Danby.

The first issue (April, 1957) of THE FREE CHURCHES had a circulation of about 8,000. 14,000 were printed of the December issue (Vol. 1, No. 4) and practically all have been taken. As its successor, THE CONGREGATIONALIST, goes to press in its first issue, requests for more than 500 additional names on the mailing list have been received.

Continuing Congregationalists have commented on the need for seminary teachers who believe in the Congregational Way. It is therefore good news that Rev. Royal G. Davis of the First Church of Houlton, Maine,

will begin studies for the Ph.D. degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, next fall, with a view to teaching the Philosophy of Religion. His resignation at Houlton takes effect April 6, 1958. Houlton's loss may prove to be the gain of future Congregationalism.

Swim Against The Current

When the Editor was a schoolboy, his grandfather, an enthusiastic fisherman, gave him a plaque to hang on his bedroom wall. It showed a fish swimming in what was obviously a strong river current. Beneath it were the words, "It takes a live fish to swim against the current; any old dead one can drift with it."

Mr. Mitchell's address at Hartford speaks of the "Flight From Freedom" which is characteristic of our day. Dr. Strang's article says that "the wave of the moment" may be taking us back before the Reformation, Independency, and the Pilgrims. There is today strong pressure on Christian people, including especially younger ministers and theological students, to go with this flight, this wave. But history shows that the future often is with those who do not drift with the current of the times. The call today is for staunch individuals who will breast the wave. "It takes a live fish to swim against the current; any old dead one can drift with it."

J. J. R.

The Unity We Seek As Free Churches

Rev. Alan Jenkins, D.D., Royal Oak, Michigan

(Condensation of an Address Given in Hartford, Connecticut, October 17, 1957, at the Third Annual Meeting of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.)

We who believe in local church autonomy have our firm, and we think fruitful, conception of Christian church unity. The unity that we seek as free churches is a fact of religious consciousness — awareness of oneness in God and Christ; it is one enriched by denominational variety; it is, in the third place, the unity of the Kingdom of God. The first objective we share with

ecumenists bent on organic church union. The second is marginal at best for the organic unionists; and the third, overshadowed in their pronouncements by the One Church concept, is basic to our vision of inter-church unity.

We hold that denominationalism has values worth preserving. Foremost is the fact that diversity among

churches helps to make possible, and may be the assurance of, enrichment of our understanding of God and His will for us. The newspaper world offers an instructive parallel. In a court case dealing with the effort of a powerful news agency to monopolize news services, Judge Learned Hand wrote that the newspaper industry "serves one of the most vital of all general interests — the dissemination of news from as many different sources and with as many different facets and colors as is possible. That interest is closely akin to, if indeed it is not the same as, the interest protected by the First Amendment; it presupposes that right conclusions are more likely to be gathered out of a multitude of tongues than through any kind of authoritative selection."

The court ruled against the news agency and this decision was upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

Headline News

As Christians we specialize in good news — that of a universe of amazing order, beauty, and "emergent novelty", that of the Father-God-Creator, that of God-in-Man, that of brotherhood, that of life eternal — what headline stories these! And what great stories involving creation, the Creator, and His purposes may yet "break"! Surely these are news stories to tax the reportorial power of man! Let us continue, then, to have the dissemination of all this wonderful news "from as many different sources (which may be denominations) and with as many different facets and colors (which may be creeds, sermons, etc.) as is possible," in the belief that "right conclusions are more likely to be gathered out of a multitude of tongues than through any kind of authoritative selection."

William E. Evjue, Wisconsin editor-publisher, has stated:

"Under the one newspaper (for a town) set-up, newspaper publishers are naturally inclined to become smug and comfortable and satisfied with the *status quo*. . . . The publishers become averse to change". (Article, *Freedom and Responsibility*, in THE CHURCHMAN, July, 1954)

Assuming its truth, this statement, like that of Judge Hand, intrigues me as a churchman with an eye cocked on religious institutions. Under the "One Church" set-up, have not religious leaders, historically speaking, developed smugness and "become averse to change" and possible improvement? On the other hand, has not the challenge of other churches usually proved salutary? Was it not the appearance of vigorous new churches that prompted the "house-cleaning" in the Roman Catholic Church known as the Counter Reformation? Does not the fact today of separate churches, including relatively new religious groups such as Unity and Jehovah's Witnesses, involve a vitality-giving challenge to all churches?

"One Big Church" Concept Repugnant

It seems to me that freedom lovers, truth seekers, and those of us who are concerned about the spiritual health of religious institutions, should find the concept of the

One Great Church as morally questionable, if not as repugnant, as that of One Great Newspaper.

The unity that we aspire to as free churches is one preserving the values inherent in the fact of separate churches, and it is the unity of the Kingdom of God — that is to say, the unity of brotherhood lived by men as children of the One Father God.

The ecumenical unionists of our day have relatively little to say about the Kingdom of God. Ignoring its prominence in Jesus' teaching, they seem to identify it in large part with what is for them an outmoded liberalism. Their eye is fixed upon the Church and upon the goal of its visible oneness. It is the Church, they say, which gives meaning (and of course visible structure!) to the Kingdom of God. Indeed it is the "Church Triumphant" which IS the Kingdom. This sometimes all-but-exclusive concern with the Church appears to be part of the Europeanizing of the prevailing ecumenical movement. Certainly it goes counter to the traditional American Protestantism which, for all its denominationalism, has centered about the realization of God's Kingdom in the human heart and in society. Emphasis upon the Kingdom and so upon Christian caring and sharing has helped to give Christianity in the United States its practical, humanitarian aspect. It is an emphasis that issues in dynamic religion, whereas concern for the Church that tends to end with the Church has meant throughout history a more or less static institutionalism. We are told today that churches should "lose their lives". Surely. But let it be into the Kingdom of God rather than into a Super-Church!

The unity that we seek as free churches has for some years been finding varied and increasingly effective expression. This has been particularly true on the local level. Through interchurch projects, like Vacation Bible Schools and Union Lenten Services; through local Councils of Churches (one in which I worked was instrumental in impressive civic reform — conservative and liberal churchmen standing shoulder to shoulder in a Christian unity of civic purpose which helped to rout evil elements and establish a new form of municipal government); and through occasional local church federations, many of us have been witnessing to what we may call free will ecumenicity. For the organic unionists of our day this is a specious thing. But we believe in it, we have seen it work, and, in what may be our ecumenical naivete, we think that it may be the will of God.

THE CONGREGATIONALIST is sponsored by the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Rev. Joseph J. Russell, Editor, 61 East St., Melrose 76, Mass. New names for the mailing list, articles for future issues, criticisms and suggestions should be sent to Mr. Russell. There is no annual subscription rate, as the National Association wishes all interested persons to have the paper. Financial contributions toward the expense of publishing it may be sent to Paul R. Biggs, Treasurer of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, Barclay Bldg., Oregon City, Oregon.